



# GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2003 2pm

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE USUAL PLACE, THE NEVADA GARDEN CLUB BUILDING, WASHINGTON AND TWIN LAKES, TWO BLOCKS EAST OF VALLEY VIEW.

**Carol Siegel, Newsletter Editor**

CAROL SIEGEL- PRESIDENT  
CLARICE DEAN -VICE-PRESIDENT  
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Clarice Dean- Trip Chairman

John Haydukavitch-Video Chief

Shelly North-Classy Club Apparel Chairlady

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February 2, 2003	Dr. Harold Koopowitz "Those Illegal Paphs"
March 2, 2003	Diana Smith "Pests and Diseases"
April 6, 2002	Matt Swift, Swift's Orchids, on "Equitant Oncidium"
May 4, 2003	Harry Phillips, Andy's Orchids, "Mounted Orchids"
June 1, 2003	Nick Burnett on "Seven Ways to Kill an Orchid"
July 6, 2003	Virtual Greenhouse Tour
August 3, 2003	Annual Mt. Charleston BBQ
September 7, 2003	Karen Muir on "Brachy Paphs"
October 5, 2003	Charles Weckerle-Thrun on "Potting Different Orchid Genera"
November 2, 2003	Mike Glikbarg, Orchids of Los Osos, Topic to be Announced



December 7, 2003	Fourth Annual International Food Fest and Holiday Party.
January 4, 2004	Norman Fang, Owner of Norman's Orchids
May 2, 2004	John Salventi, Owner of Parkside Orchids, "A Cultural Review of the Genus Dendrobium with Suggestions for New Additions to Your Collection"
November 7, 2004	The Further Exploits of Bill Bergstrom of Bergstrom Orchids
December 5, 2004	Fifth International Food Fest and Holiday Party

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We started off our glorious new year with standing room only (!) for the interesting, informative, and entertaining seminar on phalaenopsis culture by the renowned expert Bob Gordon. At the end of the newsletter, with Bob's kind permission, I have reprinted the hilarious Section 24 "Murphys Law for Phalaenopsis Growers" and also Section 17 "What Kind to Grow?" from his wonderful book CULTURE OF THE PHALAENOPSIS ORCHID (Laid Back Publications, Rialto, California, Revised 1990, pp.146-150). By the way, our library has this and three other of his books available to borrow for FREE. I have also included an article I wrote after the first time I heard Bob which summarizes his ideas, "Bob Gordon: A Phal Genius Speaks".

His chapter on "What Kind To Grow?" is meant to make us think about what kind of orchid collection we would like to have. Beginners want any plant that is cheap, blooming, and not dead in two weeks. Gradually, we find we have more shopping opportunities than time and space, and we have to make painful decisions about what NOT to buy and what to (gasp) throw out or give away. Bob has some interesting things to say on this subject.

Next month, Dr. Harold Koopowitz, author of ORCHIDS AND THEIR CONSERVATION, college professor, and editor of the ORCHID DIGEST will honor us with a slide lecture on "Those Illegal Paphiopedilum". It will be a rare opportunity to hear about wild orchids and their conservation from a widely-respected authority. I took a class with him at the Orchid Digest Summer Institute, and I thought he was a sensational teacher. Don't miss it.

Our Fourth Annual White Elephant Sale was a great success. We had a great time AND we made a fortune. We collected \$723, and we all went home happy and loaded. We had terrific items to bid on—books, wine, potting supplies, bikes, serving trays, ceramics, clocks, lamps. Many thanks to all of you who emptied

your treasure boxes and carted back more than you brought in. (You can sell it NEXT year at the White Elephant Sale). Endless thanks to Diana Smith who did a great job handling the money so it all went off without too much madness, Special kudos to all the members who came early to set up and stayed late to help break down. Thanks, too, to the Board members who provided delicious food (with recipes from our cookbook)—Diana Smith, Clarice Dean, Carol Siegel, and Eileen McKyton. Thanks in advance to Ann Shanklin, Jeri Lee, and Leslie Doyle for preparing food for our February meeting. A special "hats off" to Daniel Vong who provided phalaenopsis mericlones for sale that were sold out in minutes and to John Haydukavich who videotaped the talk (Missed the meeting? Liz has the video in our library. She has a special "in" with the videotaper...)

Don't forget your 2003 dues are due now. It is \$25 for a single, \$35 for a couple. You may pay at the meeting (21 people did at the last meeting) or send me a check made out to GLVOS (Greater Las Vegas Orchid Society) and mail it to me: Carol Siegel 8601 Robinson Ridge Drive Las Vegas, NV 89119

Don't know if you paid? On your label, (03) after your name means you have paid. (02) after your name means you have not. A \* means you were a guest and must pay this month to continue getting the newsletter. Please call or e-mail me (254-4168 [growlove@att.net](mailto:growlove@att.net)) or drop me a note if you are not going to join so we do not keep incurring the cost of the newsletter. Your membership card for 2003 is included with your newsletter if you are paid up.

We still have some cookbooks left in our project to help the homeless. I gave a cookbook to my hairdresser and she kept raving about the great food she made for Christmas from the book. Give one to a friend or relative for Valentine's Day, and she will thank you!

Your Board-Clarice, Eileen, Diana and I have met twice already, and Liz Leone, our librarian, and Shelly North have participated as well. Shelly will be doing a presentation on our T-shirts and totes and hats at the next meeting. We hope to be able to talk about these logo items at our February meeting.

In an effort to make all our new members more comfortable and more effective at growing orchids, we are starting a Mentor program. All new members will receive a little beginner packet (to which we will continue to add) and a list of members willing to be mentors. A dozen people have volunteered to be mentors so far—Tony Billitere, Clarice and Dennis Dean, Leslie Doyle, Phyllis Bond, Alex

and Eileen McKyton, Scotty and John Nogaim, Tex and Gidget Severence, Carol Siegel, Diana Smith and Marilyn Worthington. Mentors just have to be willing to have new members call for advice and answer questions and provide a little support to the inexperienced and lost. Anyone can be a mentor. Just tell us you would be willing to do this kindness. On our member roster, mentors are specified by having four dashes after their names (My typewriter doesn't make "angels"...just dashes) If you are new and want any kind of help, please ask. We are a friendly and loving group and would love to help.

For your information, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual "Fascination of Orchids" International Show and Sale at South Coast Plaza is scheduled for February 6-9. It will feature free seminars and over 60 vendors. If you can only go to one show, this is the one I would recommend. Going to the show is the birthday present I request from my husband every year because it is pure pleasure.(714-435-2160 [www.ocorchidshow.com](http://www.ocorchidshow.com) for information).

I am working on an article exploring water issues and hope to have it ready for the next newsletter, I think this is an important topic in our city with its stone-hard water.

Hope to see you February 2. Stay well. Keep blooming. With love, Carol

## Section 24. MURPHY'S LAW FOR PHALAENOPSIS GROWERS

Murphy's Law: If it can go wrong, it will. (Murphy was a phal grower.)

1. The more you paid for a plant, the greater the chances are for crown rot.
2. When you show your best phal, the judges will all be cymbidium growers.
3. Your best phal always blooms the day after an AOS judging...and gets sepal wilt the day before the next one.
4. The likelihood of a plant being awarded is inversely proportional to the owner's expectations.
5. Snails instinctively choose awardable phal clones. Corollary: AOS judges should take snail training.
6. Orchid shows are always preceded by 2 weeks of cloudy weather.
7. Flower production in all orchids is inversely proportional to the amount of care and fertilizer given.
8. The more you want a cross, the less likely it is to take. Corollary: mediocre crosses produce gobs of viable seed.
9. Gordon's Law of Pigmentation Perversity: (1) all greens are yellow; (2) all reds and blues are purple; and (3) all purples are blah. Corollary: Any phal color is possible if you don't know what you're talking about.
10. AOS *BULLETINS* are aged for 2 weeks by the publisher before delivery to the Post Office.
11. AOS *BULLETINS* are aged for 2 weeks by the Post Office before delivery to the subscriber.
12. There is no correlation between empty greenhouse bench space and the owner's financial ability to fill it.
13. The first fallacy of pest control is that it exists at all. The second is when the phals are happy, so are the scale.
14. Pride goeth before crown rot.

### Bob Gordon: A Phal Genius Speaks

I went to the fabulous South Coast Plaza Show "Fascination of Orchids" and my poor husband could not see out the back window for all the flowers on the way back. However, the highlight of the show for me was a talk by Bob Gordon, phalaenopsis genius, on everything you need to know to grow phalaenopsis orchids. I wrote down his pearls of wisdom and thought you might like to have them, too. Phals make a great plant to grow for beginners since they bloom for three months or so, and he said that they can live forever (maybe in HIS house...)

There are five important things to consider for orchid growth: **light, humidity, water and fertilizer, temperature, and air movement.** Phals are low light plants, making them perfect to grow in the house. He recommends 10 per cent of full sunlight, direct but filtered, for at least six hours a day, preferably on the southeast side of the house. If growing under lights, that translates to 1000 foot candles, a lower-light plant. (Full sunlight yields 10,000 foot candles). If growing under lights, you can grow them under two four-foot long fluorescent lights (grow lights) placed four to six inches above the phals. If growing under a HID light of 250 watts, you can place them 30 inches under the light for eight to nine hours. A light above your desk will probably only give 75 foot candles which is not enough. Use a light meter to make sure you have enough light to make the plant bloom. When getting too much light, white-flowering phal leaves get more yellow and pink-flowering phal leaves turn darker.

Bob stresss buying and using lots of fans to keep orchids the right temperature even if you make a mistake. In nature, the humidity is sometimes 90%, and the temperature in the 90's, but the cool breezes keep the plants happy.

One way to tell if you have the right amount of light is to touch the leaf after thirty minutes in the light. Make sure the leaf does not get too hot. It should be just tepid, not warm. Watch burning on a window sill. Dirty windows, he says, make a great heat and light filter. Be dirty!!

It is natural for the bottom leaf to yellow and die in two to four years. If the plant loses one leaf at a time, it is okay. After the phal blooms once, you can cut the spike down to a node one time if it is a big, healthy plant, and it will bloom

again. Don't let it keep blooming. He says, "How would you like to be pregnant all the time?!" Two blooms on a spike are enough.

He suggests watering by the weight of the pot. Lift an empty plastic pot. Then fill it with a very wet wash cloth and lift that. Then squeeze out the wash cloth, put it back in the pot, and lift it again. You want to water when the pot feels like the wash cloth has been squeezed out. Old potting media holds more water than new potting media so vary your watering time with how old the media is. Old media gets watered less; new media gets watered more. He said he waters every four days on average. He particularly likes bark for potting for the inexperienced grower or the heavy waterer. If you use New Zealand Moss, change the moss every six to eight months and don't water it too much. Small fir bark needs to be changed in less than a year, and coarse bark can be changed every 18 months. He suggests spraying the plant for repotting, roots and all, with a dilute solution of  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp Physan 20 (a disinfectant) in a gallon of water, more dilute than the label suggests. He likes to bury all the roots. An especially good suggestion is to drill extra holes in your pot to allow good drainage. If you do this and put some larger bark in the bottom, Bob thinks styrofoam is unnecessary.

Bob says that any old fertilizer will do according to label directions. Vary them. Orchids only get "bird poop" (that is a quote) and they don't get different kinds of poop at different times of year. They are not fussy. Any bird poop substitute will do, about a teaspoon in a gallon every watering. However, he hates Osmokote.

Some other tips include making sure that water does not sit in the crown of the phal and watering early in the day to prevent pseudomonas cattleya, crown rot.

Phals like the same temperatures that people like, 60-85 degrees and like a sharp drop in temperature in the winter to trigger a spike. He thinks that worries the phal and makes it bloom. He thinks a little stress scares the plant into blooming. Really.

Bob Gordon is a great speaker and his book, *Culture of the Phalaenopsis Orchid*, is just wonderful. Read it!!

## **Section 17. WHAT KIND TO GROW? (Pick a color, any color.)**

**D**ON'T YOU DARE SKIP THIS SECTION! THERE'S STUFF IN HERE FOR ALL PHAL GROWERS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY DECIDED WHAT KIND TO GROW.

Rather than just stumbling into growing whatever you have most of in your greenhouse the way most of us do, it can be useful to think a little before you start or, as is more probably the case, to organize your thinking and reorganize how you go about growing your orchids.

It is common practice in the business world to sit down periodically and ask or re-ask the purpose of the enterprise; then set down the answer to the question in writing...to serve as a guide in future business activities as a charter. The practice works with people's activities, too. It doesn't have to be like drawing up articles of incorporation, only to ask yourself "what do I get the most enjoyment or reward from?"

Sometimes, the answers will knock your socks off because they aren't what you may have assumed before. Knowing what does the most for you, you can concentrate on those things and maximize your enjoyment and eliminate the confusion that results from trying to learn about all the 700 plus orchid species and 75,000 or so hybrids (that have been registered).

**PICK ONE SPECIES, OR PICK JUST SPECIES, AND LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT IT...AND WATCH THE CONFUSION AND FEAR OF NOT KNOWING WHAT YOU ARE DOING...DRAIN AWAY. PHALS ARE A GOOD CHOICE.**

In the vernacular, phals are 'user-friendly' and a great place to begin really enjoying the world's most sophisticated flower. Let's take a look at the different groups of people who grow them. Maybe you'll see yourself here.

I've noted five different groupings of Phalaenopsis enthusiasts; there may be many more, but these represent the majority of the different types of growers I've met. In a descending order of number of fans:

### **GROWERS: FOR THE FUN AND PRETTIES.**

Far and away the largest group of phal growers is in this category. They grow phals, probably along with other orchids just for the pure enjoyment of the classical elegance of the flowers and in the company of others who do the same. (Included are those who won a few phals from the plant raffle table and don't want to throw them away.)

Most of this group are very sociable and enjoy flower shows, field trips, and other orchid society activities. Many of this group don't have greenhouses, not at this stage at least, and grow their phals as super house plants. For these folks, I recommend a selection of small whites and pinks, a few novelties and a few species Phalaenopsis, the numbers depending on space available.

Large whites and pinks take up a lot of room; as much as, if not more than, a large cattleya. Avoid phals mounted on slabs if you don't have a greenhouse. (Even if you *have* a greenhouse, avoid them.) They need to be watered at least once a day in the dry weather and that can be a nuisance even with a greenhouse, but more so in the home. You can learn to hate a plant like that.



**THERE REALLY IS NO REASON NOT TO GROW A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING IN THE PHALAENOPSIS GENUS IF YOU ARE IN THIS GROUP.**

This grouping of growers is a first stage for many who later on become serious growers in one of the other categories of enthusiasts. About all you have to *avoid* is getting more than you can handle, especially the big whites and pinks.

How big the plants are going to be when they mature is hard to know when they're in two and a half-inch pots, so ask about the mature size of the plant when buying. Even better, buy them in flower, but that's no guarantee, either. I bought a modest-sized *angraecum sesquipedale* in flower and several years later had to make a decision between getting rid of it or building it a greenhouse of its own. I put the varietal name 'Fat Albert' on it. Guess why.

Size of the plant and tight space limitations make a pretty good case for considering miniature phals. Interest in *Phalaenopsis* minis has caught up with that of the *cattleya* minis, and shortly will surpass them.

We're starting to see more of the *lindenii*, *javanica*, *parishii*, and *equestris* hybrids now and some of these are true miniatures, with a leaf span of only 8 to 10 inches on a mature plant and clouds of lovely, little flowers on spikes only 8 inches in length.

Collecting and growing these tiny beauties could be an enchanting experience and, it follows, that hybridizing them may be an exciting ride on the wave of the future of *Phalaenopsis* orchids.

Want to make a mark in the history books? Look no further than right here. The miniature *oncidiums* and *cattleyas* certainly are being grown in numbers that few outside of people like Jack Woltmon and Frank Fordyce would have thought possible just a few years ago. I think that these would be a practical and pleasant choice of phals to grow in the cooler regions.

In shopping for the little growers like these, watch and ask for crosses made with *equestris*, *javanica*, *parishii*, and *lindenii*, particularly among themselves. Phal Cassandra (*equestris* x *stuartiana*) is another excellent mini-breeder.

Should you decide to specialize in miniature phals, I think you will find the field wide open and it won't take most thinking people long to get to the threshold of the art.

**SOME OF THE GROUPINGS IN ORCHIDS ARE OVER-POPULATED, SO IF YOU LIKE A LOT OF COMPANY, STAY WITH THE GENERALISTS. BUT IF YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF DOING SOMETHING NO ONE HAS DONE BEFORE YOU, BECOME A SPECIALIST.**

If you do, you will find very quickly how relatively little is known about *Phalaenopsis* hybridizing by the world and just how wide open a field it is. To dabble...or dive in; that's a good question, the answer to which is, probably, yes.

**GROWERS: THE SERIOUS HOBBYIST AND AMATEUR HYBRIDIZER.**

This second largest group of phal growers probably represents no more than 5 per cent of orchid growers in general. Most arrived in

this group by way of the above one, and are mostly people who enjoy a challenge or doing something uncommon or useful to society. The idea of putting their names in a history book is usually buried not too deeply. They are the phal nuts, the evangelists, the bores who see life in terms of how it affects the Phalaenopsis genus, who write books on them, and who walk around with silly smiles on their faces as though they'd just discovered the Meaning of Life (and they may have).

If escape from boredom and tedium is among your reasons for growing orchids in general or phals in particular, I invite you to join us; this way to the deep end.

There are many reasons why people become serious phal growers. Some see commercial possibilities, or self-realization, or glamour in association with a symbol of elegance or the multitude of other reasons why people do as they do. The self-satisfaction and feeling of well-being enjoyed by these enthusiasts usually falls only to researchers, scientists and educators. Headiness takes on a new dimension when you've experienced the highs enjoyed by these committed amateurs.

Members of this group also are a major source of forward movement in orchidology because they have the time, the means and incentive to do things that are not yet done, especially those things that do not promise monetary reward...at least not right away.

Among this group is a greater degree of specialization than in other groups because it quickly becomes apparent to them that limitation of subject material is necessary before any progress can be made. You have to find a hand-hold on the elephant before you can pick him up.

You will find here specialists in yellow, red, green, orange, and even blue. Some are working on miniatures, multifloras, cold-resistant, smog-resistant, square-flowered, fragrance, intergeneric hybrids, splash petals, albinos, whites with colored lips and other such tasty subjects that intrigue the inquisitive mind. If you see yourself in the group, come join. You might even join John Miller, Dr. Steve Pridgen, me and a few others in the search for the Perfect Green.

### **A FEW ARE SUCCESSFUL AT GROWING PHALS COMMERCIALY,**

but not many. Marketing outlets are limited, fickle, and saturated with lower-priced products that compete for discretionary dollars. One major nursery owner told me the only reason why he continued in the business was the appreciation of the market value of greenhouse real estate. There is, however, a very substantial number of hobbyists and fungrowers who sell a few plants and flowers and subsidize their 'habit' this way.

If you have in mind to grow phals for profit, be advised that the principal market is flowering plants; pinks, whites and stripes; and essentially limited to the months of February through May. These are mostly sold to non-orchidists and concentrated around the holidays of Valentines Day, Easter and Mothers Day. The sale of phals to orchid growers is fairly constant throughout the year, but heaviest in the spring when Phalaenopsis flowers are in bloom.

A sad aspect of 'going commercial' on a significant scale, though, is the compromising of amateur ideals in the process. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to do both. You may find it less than gratifying to pursue this

course, because you will find yourself growing things that the market wants...and not what you want. Are you ready for that?

Before you take the step, or make any serious commitment to do so, talk to local hobbyists or commercial growers about the market. It is highly segmented, seasonal, and small.

Disappointed? Good. I may just have saved you a lot of money and heartache.

### **GROWERS: AND THEN THERE ARE THE SPECIES NUTS.**

Among the most highly-motivated idealists in Phalaenopsis culture are those who focus their attention on the species of one or more genera and whose objective is the preservation of all existing orchid species, with special attention to those in danger of extinction.

Their methods of preservation range from propagation of rare species to the establishment of seed banks where seed and pollen are stored cryogenically for the future. A fascinating appeal for the need to preserve the endangered species, including orchids, appears in a book *Plant Extinction: a Global Crisis* by Dr. Harold Koopowitz of UC Irvine, himself an AOS judge, an orchid enthusiast and a guru of the conservation movement. Highly recommended reading. (Koopowitz and Kaye, 1983)

While the hybridizer looks forward, the species fan looks backward...on the millennia to which we are the beneficiaries. Few are more enthusiastic and dedicated than these. Species is spoken in sub-groups of almost every society and species clubs are not uncommon. Inquire locally.

### **PERSPECTIVE.**

There are limitations to ideal Phalaenopsis culture, some obvious, some not so obvious. Space limitation is one that affects most of us, all greenhouse or bench space being finite. That is true whether we have 3 or 3,000 square feet of bench space, but the solution to the problem is the same...bite the bullet periodically and purge the stuff that doesn't meet your current expectations or needs. Unless your livelihood depends on it, when you get one, get rid of one.

Most orchid growers have heard the old-timer's advice for greenhouse construction: "Figure what you need, then double it". I'd like to modify that; when you're done doubling it, cut it in half again, because that probably is all you can handle, *properly*, given the usual constraints of earning a living and keeping up your Happy Home insurance. For every phal grower who underestimates his capacity to handle a given number of plants, there are at least 10 who go the other way and overestimate their ability to care for x-number of plants.

Be honest about it. We are a materialistic people and most orchid growers don't suffer too severely an incapacity to pay for more than they can tend to. (There is an uncomfortable parallel with food here.) I won't lay the one on you that you can't be too rich or too thin, but the message should be clear.

In the purest sense, you can derive as much enjoyment from one plant in bloom at a time as you can from a thousand. Look at the serenity of Zen contemplation of simple things.

And you know what they call the urge to have more than you really need! Greed is a nasty word to be used in a book on orchids, but...

Time is another stricture and much of what I suggested above applies here as well. If time is a problem, avoid very small pots and slab mountings which require frequent waterings. Ditto on high-hung plants. Eliminate these types from your collection until you have more time to devote to them.

Pot a size larger than normal and you may be able to extend watering intervals to 7 days in the summer and 10 to 14 days in the winter. Automated, overhead watering is okay, but it is tricky in the short-day season and should be shut off during that time. Get a friend to come in and do your plants if you must be away...or board them at a nursery. It's a lot safer that way.

Unless you are a big-time grower or have trouble getting into the greenhouse on a regular basis to do your chores, don't waste your time trying to use an injector system to feed while you're away if you're not gone more than a week or two at a time...or even a month. The phals will do fine for that long without fertilizer (but not without water!), but water the day before feeding them.

The controller on an auto-watering system can be set to intervals up to 7 days and watering time can be varied for each individual 'zone' or group of plants.

One of the nice things about being a specialist is finding another soul who likes the same thing. Correspondence with these culture-kin can be the source of a great satisfaction. Every now and again I meet one of these friends I didn't know I had and get a shot of enthusiasm (and an infusion of new ideas) from the experience.

Whatever you decide to grow, do it with com-

mitment and enthusiasm. The experience will brighten and lengthen your life. Come on in, the water's fine.